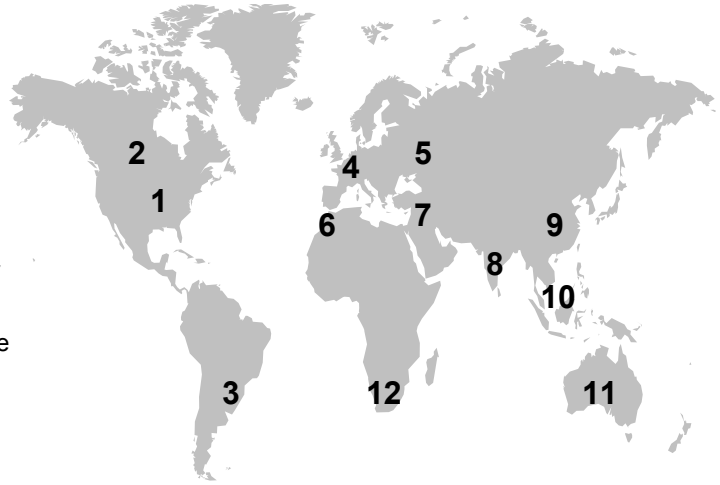
WORLD AGRICULTURAL WEATHER HIGHLIGHTS
May 12, 2004



USDA/OCE – World Agricultural Outlook Board
Joint Agricultural Weather Facility
(More details are available in the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin. Subscription information may be obtained by calling (202) 720-7917.)

1 - UNITED STATES
During April, warm, mostly dry weather persisted across much of California and the Northwest, accelerating the loss of high-elevation snow and increasing irrigation demands. Farther south and east, however, early-April storminess provided drought relief in the Four Corners States. The wet weather extended across the southern Plains and Rio Grande Valley, causing fieldwork delays but benefiting winter grains and newly planted summer crops. Meanwhile, rain and snow on the central High Plains aided drought-stressed winter wheat. Extremely dry conditions persisted, however, on the northern High Plains, increasing stress on winter grains and emerging spring wheat. Below-normal precipitation was also observed in the Midwest, promoting a record corn planting pace. Across the South, showery weather in the western Gulf Coast region contrasted with another drier-than-normal month in much of the Southeast. Although late-month showers eased stress on Southeastern crops and pastures, many areas were in need of additional rainfall.

2 - CANADA
Across the Prairies, topsoil moisture is limited for germination and establishment of spring grains and oilseeds, especially in drought-stricken sections of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

3 - SOUTH AMERICA
In late April and early May, widespread rain covered major crop areas of central Argentina and southern Brazil, increasing moisture reserves for winter wheat establishment but causing some delays in summer crop harvesting. The rain benefited late-planted corn and soybeans in western Argentina, but generally came too late to significantly improve summer crop prospects elsewhere. Brazil soybean harvesting was virtually complete by early May.

4 - EUROPE
Near- to above-normal precipitation fell across most of Europe in April, favoring vegetative winter grains and oilseeds and summer crop planting and germination. The moisture that fell in southern Italy and southern Spain was especially beneficial for reproductive to filling winter grains. In the lower Danube River Valley, below-normal rainfall reduced soil moisture for winter and summer crop development. In early May, wet weather alleviated short-term dryness in portions of northeastern France and Germany, but dryness continued in the lower Danube River Valley.

5 - FSU-WESTERN
A hard freeze spread southward across the region from April 3-4. Crop damage was likely confined to extreme southern growing areas in Ukraine and the Southern Region in Russia, where spring-sown crops were emerging and winter grains were in or nearing the jointing stage of development. Below-normal precipitation persisted in Ukraine in April, helping spring planting activities, but lowering soil moisture needed for developing winter grains and spring-sown crop emergence. Near- to above-normal precipitation was observed in Russia, maintaining adequate soil moisture conditions. Since early May, much-needed rain has fallen in Ukraine, benefiting winter grains and spring-sown crops.

6 - NORTHWESTERN AFRICA
Across Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, widespread near- to above-normal rainfall in April continued to benefit reproductive to filling winter grains. In early May, rain slowed winter grain harvesting in Morocco, while drier weather benefited crop maturation in Algeria and Tunisia.

7 - MIDDLE EAST AND TURKEY
In central Turkey and western Iran, near-normal April rainfall and temperatures maintained adequate soil moisture for vegetative winter grains.

8 - SOUTH ASIA
In April and early May, unseasonable wetness increased irrigation supplies for spring-sown rice and cotton across India and Bangladesh. However, unusually heavy rain in northern India disrupted winter wheat harvesting and raised concern for crop quality.

9 - EASTERN ASIA
In April, unfavorably dry weather gave way to timely rainfall late in the month, benefiting reproductive winter wheat on the North China Plain. Moisture reserves were mostly favorable for rice and other crops in southern China, while moisture was limited for summer crop germination and establishment in parts of Manchuria. Above-normal temperatures throughout China increased crop-water requirements.

10 - SOUTHEAST ASIA
In April, mostly dry weather favored rice harvesting in Java, Indonesia, while rainfall was adequate in oil palm areas of Indonesia and Malaysia. A slow start to the rainy season kept moisture levels unfavorably low in the Philippines. In eastern Thailand, showers boosted moisture supplies for summer corn and rice.

11 - AUSTRALIA
During much of April, dry weather favored cotton and sorghum harvesting in Queensland and northern New South Wales. However, late-April and early-May rain halted harvesting, but boosted topsoil moisture for winter grain planting. In contrast, drought continued in interior sections of southeastern Australia, delaying winter grain planting. In Western Australia, below-normal April rainfall favored winter wheat and barley planting, while early-May rainfall aided germination and emergence.

12 – SOUTH AFRICA
In April, showers improved winter wheat prospects in primary growing areas of Western Cape, Free State, and North West. In late April and early May, mostly dry, unseasonably mild weather promoted dry down and harvest of corn and other summer crops.